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**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO 20-H 7477,
RELATING TO SEX OFFENDERS
February 25, 2020**

The ACLU of RI opposes this bill, which would authorize innkeepers to kick out any Level III sex offender living in the establishment for more than 30 days.

Sex offenders deserve to be punished for their crimes, but this legislation – like many of the other laws that target sex offenders – is counter-productive and will have no positive effect on public safety. Instead, it serves to further punish offenders after they have been released from prison, and it can have the effect, however unintended, of unnecessarily promoting re-incarceration.

Similar to the residency restrictions that the General Assembly has enacted, which bar sex offenders from living within a certain distance of schools, this bill is based on the deeply flawed assumption that strangers commit most sexual abuse. Yet the statistics are clear: approximately 90% of child sexual assaults are committed by family members, friends or acquaintances of the victim, not by strangers who find their victims at schools or bus stops or hotels. Thus, bills like this completely miss the mark.

Unfortunately, they also have the negative impact of making it very difficult for sex offenders to reintegrate themselves into the community, and the resulting instability can have the effect of increasing, rather than decreasing, the likelihood of recidivism. It also increases their risks of homelessness and thereby limits police ability to monitor their location.

Some of the offenders whom this bill is aimed at are probably living in these hotels because the residency laws this General Assembly has passed have forced them to go there. In light of the counterproductive consequences associated with this legislation, we urge its rejection.